Church Asks Permanent Committee to Oversee 'Strategic' Agenc

by Walter Pincus
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Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) of the Senate intelligence committee wants future oversight of the "strategic intelligence agencies" to be handled by a permanent joint congressional committee.

Emphasizing he was speaking only for himself, Church said that the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency should be included within the scope of the new committee.

Church added, however, that the DIA would be included "if it is retained." There is some feeling in his committee, Church said, that DIA "seems to be redundant."

Church said he believes a new joint intelligence committee should be "relatively small" with from 12 to 20 members split evenly between the House and the Senate.

Church and Rep. Otis Pike (D-NY), chairman of the House intelligence committee, have talked about what structure should be created on Capitol Hill after current investigations have concluded.

Church said Tuesday that the two had "generally agreed on what's needed."

However, Pike, confirming that he and Church had "similar ideas," said he was not going to preempt his committee by stating any of his conclusions.

Last Friday, Pike sent a letter to all of his committee's members and heads of intelligence agencies asking them for legislative suggestions to meet the problems exposed by the current inquiries.

Church believes a new committee should have a rotating membership to "fight co-option" by the executive branch. Church's proposal would be that members serve a six-year term and that one-third of the members would leave the committee each congressional session.

Three seats on the proposed joint committee would be held by members from three committees that now have jurisdiction over intelligence — Armed Services, Foreign Relations and Appropriations — to avoid jurisdictional fighting and prevent intelligence agencies from having to report to more than one committee. The CIA and other intelligence agencies would by law be required to keep the joint committee fully informed on all their activities, including covert operations.

To avoid another proposed joint committee would not have responsibility for such domestic agencies as the FBI, Secret Service and Internal Revenue Service.

Church's committee has a staff task force looking into oversight both on congressional and executive levels. Hearings on are expected towar the year.

A Governmental subcommittee has hearings in Decen new congressio telligence oversi mittee and some hope that a resoluti up such a group passed by the February, when th committee goes business.